

1970

30 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS

2000

REMEMBER THE PAST



PROTECT THE FUTURE



1999 ANNUAL REPORT

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Pacific Southwest/Region 9

EPA-909-R-00-001

ARIZONA | CALIFORNIA | HAWAII | NEVADA | PACIFIC ISLANDS

CAROL M. BROWNER
EPA ADMINISTRATOR

EPA was born 30 years ago at a time when rivers caught fire and cities were hidden under dense clouds of smoke. We've made remarkable progress since then. But we can't rest on our success.

Our mission to protect the environment, and to protect public health, is a mission without end. New challenges loom over the horizon as surely as the new day.

We must continue our work to ensure that with each new dawn, the sun shines through clear skies and upon clean waters – and all our families enjoy the blessings of good health.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carol M. Browner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

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HEALTHY AIR AT LAST: *In one of 1999's major highlights, EPA approved a cooperative plan to reduce dust storms and the worst particulate air pollution in the U.S. at Owens Valley, CA (see page 8). At the signing ceremony, from the left: Ellen Hardebeck, Great Basin Air Pollution Control District; Ruth Galanter, Los Angeles City Council; Felicia Marcus, EPA's Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest; Sandra Jefferson-Yonge, Lone Pine-Paiute-Shoshone Tribe; David Freeman, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power; Larry Biland, EPA air staff.*

INTRODUCTION

1999 *was a milestone year for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – in more ways than one. Of course, 1999 began our 30th year of protecting public health and the environment, and we and our partners in state, tribal and local government have*

a lot to show for three decades of work: air pollution and toxic releases have decreased dramatically despite massive population and economic growth; more than half of the top-priority Superfund hazardous waste sites have remedies in place; and treatment systems have been installed on most sewage and industrial plants, yielding cleaner rivers, lakes and beaches.

1999 was also special because of major accomplishments across the Pacific Southwest. For example, EPA: had a banner year in enforcing environmental laws; facilitated a landmark agreement to clean up Southern California's smog; required better maintenance of

Maui sewer systems to halt sewage spills that contaminated streams and beaches; developed unique pollution prevention plans for watersheds along California's northern coast; joined with Nevada in cleaning up rocket fuel chemicals threatening Las Vegas and Southern California water supplies; cleaned up a host of Superfund sites; approved a plan to clean up Owens Valley, located in eastern California and site of the nation's worst particulate air pollution; carried out dozens of emergency clean-ups, such as extinguishing the massive Westley tire fire in the Central Valley; and targeted grants to help reduce childrens' exposure to lead, asbestos, pesticides, and asthma.

Yet as important as these tangible accomplishments are, what is more significant is the change in how we approach our work. While maintaining a strong regulatory and enforcement presence, we have dramatically enhanced our efforts to work with states, tribes, local governments and stakeholders from environmental, business, agricultural and other communities. We have done this within our traditional work in a number of ways: for example, by being more accessible and responsive to community concerns in our Superfund program; by using the legal requirement to set water quality standards in California's Bay-Delta as a focal point for CALFED, the massive engagement of government and public stakeholders that has continued since 1994; and by boosting outreach efforts in all our programs.

We have also done it through innovative and once unthinkable collaborations – such as the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission, involving states, tribes, utilities and environmentalists, and Border XXI where we have replaced the binational federal-to-federal government approach on the U.S.-Mexico border with an historic agreement between both federal governments, ten state governments and over 20 tribes on the U.S. side of the border to work jointly to solve the pressing public health and environmental crises there.

With traditionally regulated entities, we have also engaged to solve problems together in more productive ways – such as our pollution prevention efforts like the MERIT Partnership in Southern California with metal platers, aerospace, refineries, even industrial laundries, or our efforts with auto shops, metal platers and wineries. Our agriculture initiative works with farmers to support more environmentally friendly farming. And for individuals, our own Hotline (415/744-1500 with an 800 number coming soon) and website

(www.epa.gov/region09) and support for similar efforts (like the US Recycling Hotline at 800/CLEANUP) puts consumer and environmental information into the hands of anyone concerned about their community.

Throughout this report, you'll see examples of how we've partnered to solve problems and, just as important, create new capacities to fight environmental and public health threats. Some partnerships are high-profile, like CALFED or Border XXI. Other ventures are less visible, like our efforts to help build up tribal environmental and environmental justice programs. Yet no matter what the partnership, you'll find they have several things in common: patience; dedication; cooperation; an openness to all communities, but especially those that have been neglected in the past, such as tribes and communities of color; and an eagerness to combine our efforts and knowledge with anyone who wants to protect the environment.

The toughest thing about doing this, our first annual progress report, is that there is not enough space to describe with any justice the work done by EPA in concert with others. And there is certainly too little space to describe the more complex challenges that lie ahead. Consider this report, then, in the spirit in which it is offered: as a series of examples of our enthusiasm, commitment, and energy and as an offer of partnership to those who would work with us to make this a better region for all.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Felicia Marcus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Felicia" being more prominent than the last name "Marcus".

Felicia Marcus
Regional Administrator
EPA Pacific Southwest